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ABSTRACT

The practicum utilized four inservice training sessions to teach data entry clerks, staffing specialists, special educators, and gifted teachers to enter student data into the school system's data base management system on a more timely basis and with greater accuracy. The practicum also developed data input forms which could be used regardless of employee position, level of understanding of special education terminology, or experience with computers. Inservice training on re-evaluation procedures and data entry for teachers of the gifted was another practicum component. The practicum demonstrated that online data entry can be improved by involving administrators, setting program compliance levels, using data entry forms, and providing hands-on inservice. Such inservice training should be designed to remove the fear of using computers, and be paced according to the experience level of the participants. Appended are the data input record sheet and the survey form used to assess data entry procedures and understanding of terminology. Includes 12 references. (DB)

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Increasing the Timeliness and Accuracy of Data Entry for Exceptional Education Students Ages 3 to 21 Through the Use of Hands-On Computer Inservice Training

by

Gale E. Kofsky

Cluster 34

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A Practicum Proposal presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1990

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DEDICATION

This practicum is dedicated to my loving husband, Paul, who has given me an immeasurable amount of support and encouragement throughout this practicum.

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I wish to thank Dr. Tekerman, Yazmin Mills, Debbie Gropper, and the specialists who graciously shared their experiences and insights about data entry procedures.

Special thanks go to all the teachers of the gifted, staffing specialists, data entry clerks, and ESE Department Chairpersons in Region I who attended the data entry inservice training sessions and who spent countless hours updating and correcting ESE data over the last four months.

I am especially grateful to Mr. Burke, the Region I Coordinating Principal of Exceptional Student Education /Federal Programs, for facilitating the successful implementation and completion of this practicum. His guidance and understanding have been invaluable.

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier: Joseph P. Burke

Region Coordinating Principal of Exceptional Student Education/Federal Programs

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November 26, 1990

Date

This practicum report was submitted by Gale Kofsky under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed. D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Date of Final Approval of Report

JoEllen Salce Rogers, Ph.D., Adviser

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....iv

LIST OF TABLES.....v

ABSTRACT.....vi

Chapter

I INTRODUCTION.....1

Description of Work Setting and Community.....1
Writer's Work Setting and Role.....3

II STUDY OF THE PROBLEM.....6

Problem Description.....6
Problem Documentation.....11
Causative Analysis.....16
Relationship of the Problem to the Literature...20

III ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS.....26

Goals and Expectations.....26
Behavioral Objectives.....26
Measurement of Objectives.....27
Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events.....31
Description of Plans for Analyzing Results.....32

IV SOLUTION STRATEGY.....34

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions.34
Description of Selected Solution.....40
Report of Action Taken.....42

V RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....45

Results.....45
Discussion.....54
Recommendations.....58
Dissemination.....59

REFERENCES.....60

Appendices

A STUDENT SERVICES/EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM DATA INPUT RECORD SHEET.....59

B SURVEY OF DATA ENTRY PROCEDURES AND ASSESSMENT OF ESE TERMINOLOGY.....62

LIST OF TABLES

PAGE

Tables

1 Relation Between Program Compliance and Size of Exceptional Student Enrollment.....13

2 Identification of Schools with Less than 80% Compliance and Recommended Strategies.....47

3 Peformance Scores of Data Entry Clerks Before and After Instruction.....49

4 Percentage of Correct Responses to Questions on the Pretest.....50

5 Total Number of Expired Gifted IEPs and Reevaluations Reduced Reduced Over Four Months.....51

6 Monthly Status Report of Schools with Less than 80% Compliance.....53

ABSTRACT

Increasing the Timeliness and Accuracy of Data Entry for Exceptional Education Students Ages 3 to 21 Through the Use of Hands-On Computer Inservice. Miami, Florida., 1990: Practicum I Report, Nova University, Ed. D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Descriptors: Data Based Management Systems/Accountability/Exceptional Student Education/Information Management/Data Administration/ Data Entry/Computerized Recordkeeping

This practicum aimed to increase the accuracy and timeliness of ESE data through hands-on computer inservice training. Two corollary aims were to increase the consistent recording of ESE information in one of the school district's DBMSs and to increase the understanding of ESE terminology used by data entry clerks.

Four hands-on inservice training sessions were scheduled to familiarize data entry clerks, staffing specialists, ESE/CST Chairpersons, and gifted teachers with ESE data entry procedures used in ISIS, a DBMS. Data input record sheets were also developed by the author to help increase the accuracy of data being entered. Schools which had been documented as having low compliance were targeted for special assistance and training. Correspondence was sent monthly and strategies which would reduce the problem were recommended. The status of expired IEPs and reevaluations was recorded for each of these schools monthly. A preassessment/ survey instrument developed by the author was used to design appropriate hands-on activities for the inservice training sessions. All participants took a posttest after the inservice.

Outcomes of this practicum were very positive. The four objectives were reached successfully and were even surpassed in most areas. In addition, there were many unexpected gains with potential long-term effects for the benefit of the school district. The data from this practicum strongly demonstrated that ESE data entry can be enhanced by the use of: (a) data input sheets which use coded tables, b) hands-on computer training sessions for all levels of ESE staff, and (c) separate inservice training on reevaluation procedures and data entry for teachers of the gifted.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

The author of this practicum is the department head for staffing specialists and gifted programs in one of the six administrative offices in a large metropolitan school district. This region office is responsible for providing instruction to approximately 48,000 students. Ten percent of these children are enrolled in an Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Program and/or receive some type of related service, such as speech or language therapy. The public school system offers special classes in the least restrictive environment (LRE) in each of the 45 schools in the region. Handicapped children with special needs, such as the emotionally handicapped, severely emotionally disturbed, hearing impaired, moderate to severely mentally handicapped, and the physically impaired are transported to the ESE program closest to their home. Many of these students attend classes at one of the six ESE Centers in the region. These schools house many different ESE programs and are capable of providing a wide variety of related services including occupational, physical, and intensive speech therapy, psychological counseling, and certain nursing services.

Although 15% of the school-aged children residing in this area attend a private school, they are allowed by law to be evaluated and to receive services from the public school system. Many of these students receive speech therapy. Some attend a gifted resource program one or two days a week, while other students choose to enroll in special classes only during the summer.

The ethnic composition of students in this region is 58% Hispanic, 32% Black, and 10% White. This district also has received a large number of refugees from Cuba and Nicaragua, a figure which has increased by 41% over the last two years. Unfortunately, many of these students report that they had been unable to attend school or receive proper medical attention in their native countries.

This district spans a total of 165 square miles and is composed of two municipalities, one unincorporated neighborhood, and one special taxing district. This area is also well-known for its manmade lakes and waterways, interstate highways, sports stadium, industrial parks, and tri-county railroad system.

Many of the residents in these communities do not have a permanent address and find it necessary to move frequently during the school year. Providing special services to children who have no forwarding address, phone, or means of transportation is often difficult. A large number of families receive public benefits to help care for their

handicapped child. The school system also works closely with parents applying for federal assistance. These programs help families with disabled children cope with the added financial cost of special services. It is especially helpful in households which qualify for public or general aid (welfare). There are also families within the community who earn in excess of $75,000 a year.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The area office for Exceptional Student Programs plays an important role in overseeing the delivery of special education and related services to children in the region. The region office is also responsible for providing inservice training for administrators and ESE Department Chairpersons. Some workshops involve reviewing recent landmark cases related to Public Law (P.L.) 94-142 and P.L. 89-313 Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. Other inservices are based on data contained in computerized production reports received from the Office of Information and Technology (OIT). These reports present the most current information available on program accountability, personnel, and the amount of ESE services provided by schools in the region and are often used as a decision making tool.

Over the last two years batch reports have been used to assess the timeliness and accuracy of ESE data entered into the computer at each school site. This is measured by the number of expired IEPs and reevaluations that are reported

for each school and reported data errors. The documentation contained in these production reports is stored in a data base called ISIS, the Integrated Student Information System.

In this author's work setting there are three groups of personnel involved in some aspect of the data entry process. These include ESE Chairpersons/Program Specialists, data entry clerks, and staffing specialists. Each person is responsible for submitting ESE information except the data entry clerk; their primary responsibility is entering information into ISIS. The duties of the ESE chairperson include recording the outcomes of annual staffings, reevaluations, and changes in part-time and full-time placements. In some schools the ESE chairperson is authorized to enter this information, in other schools the data entry clerk does it. The staffing specialists are responsible for conducting conferences related to initial placements, changes in exceptionality, temporary assignments, and placements in an alternative education programs. They are also required to record the results of their staffings on data input worksheets prior to submitting it to the data entry clerk.

The position of the staffing specialist chairperson involves four major job responsibilities. The most important of these duties is to provide information about program operations and/or cases to the Region Coordinating Principal of Exceptional Student Education/Federal Programs. The

Department Head of Staffing Specialists also provides individual guidance and assistance to other placement specialists and often acts as an arbitrator in cases requiring technical assistance. Monthly meetings are held to discuss changes in federal, state, and local procedures, articulation, the opening of new programs, and cases which require a region or district staffing. The author also acts as the liaison between the public school system and different government agencies which need documentation of a child's ESE placement or intellectual functioning.

As the region chairperson of gifted programs in this district, the author serves as a link between the ESE Department in the region and the teachers of the gifted. The primary responsiblity is providing assistance when needed.

Although, the job of staffing specialist chairperson and region department head of gifted programs involves a variety of skills, the ability to use online DBMSs is rapidly becoming a job prerequisite.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Until 1986, only four schools in the county had the use of a DBMS to manage student information. For the next three years these schools piloted a variety of recordkeeping programs designed to enhance the quick retrieval and storage of academic records, attendance, ESE information, and disciplinary actions. In 1989, all schools were given access to two different DBMSs, ISIS, the Integrated Student Information System and PARIS, the Pupil Ad Hoc Request Information System. PARIS became especially helpful for retrieving multiple elements about a group of students, i.e., IQ scores, evaluation dates, previous school, stanines, etc.

Within the next year, every school site had at least one terminal hooked up to the mainframe. Programs used to store, retrieve, and input student information were expanded and the screens containing exceptional education information were revised. Registrars and administrators now had the ability to retrieve information about a student while conducting a parent/student conference. The Special Services Screen in ISIS was used by exceptional education administrators to record and retrieve information for children enrolled in ESE programs at their school site. This

on-line application often prevented students from missing classes and/or receiving services when changing schools because information about their placement was not available. The DBMS's ability to retrieve data had eliminated the need to wait for a child's cumulative folder to arrive before scheduling the student in the appropriate classes. Prior to the use of on-line DBMS applications, a school had to manually locate information in a child's folder or request the cumulative file from the student's previous school.

However, many counselors, visiting teachers, and administrators continued to manually record student service, referral, and ESE information on Student Case Management (SCM) forms; these were later eliminated. The SCM forms were then sent to the district attendance office. It often took one or two weeks before the data was entered. This service was subsequently discontinued on July 1, 1989. Each school was made responsible for entering, updating, and correcting information for their own students.

As the use of computers grew, the Office of Management Information Systems (MIS) found it necessary to create two new departments, the Office of Information Technology (OIT) and the Office of Technological Training (OTT). As time passed, OIT found it necessary to modify the Special Services screens to meet additional state requirements added during the 1989-90 school year. These changes made the current computer applications manual obsolete, and funds

were not available to prepare a revised edition. The office of OIT solved this problem by publishing System Update Bulletins. These help sheets were designed to inform users of the latest on-line computer modifications and enhancements. Despite the use of these bulletins, many data entry clerks found the process of entering ESE information confusing. Many of these problems were the direct result of computer programming "glitches". For example, certain data elements had to be entered in more than one field to avoid creating class scheduling and transportation problems. Had the programmers realized that the Special Services screens needed to interface with each other some of these problems might have been avoided. While the county was moving into the age of on-line computer technology, the State Department of Education was preparing to conduct FTE audits through their own on-line DBMS called FIRN, Florida Information Resource Network.

Now it would be possible for schools to access information about students enrolled in ESE programs, provided that the data had been entered into the mainframe. Many hours were spent coding and entering information stored in cumulative student folders into two different data bases, ISIS and SCM. This job was time consuming and laborious. In order to meet this ongoing and increasing demand to computerize the recordkeeping process, the county created the position of data entry clerk. People hired for this job

were given the responsibility for entering, updating, and correcting data in ISIS. Schools with large special education centers often generated enough funds to hire their own data entry clerks. Yet in many small elementary schools the position remained unfilled. The pool of experienced data entry clerks was limited. Others feared the use of computers and the training it required.

By the beginning of the 1989-90 school year inservice training had been scheduled for all staffing specialists and data entry clerks. The workshops were held in the auditoriums of centrally located schools in the county. The trainers used handouts to demonstrate different data entry procedures. Computer labs were not available during the initial orientation sessions. Reactions to these inservices were mixed; many people were excited about the use of computers, while others were upset by the additional work.

Within the first year of operation, OIT created a computerized monthly report to monitor the status of ESE data entry. This report was called the Out-of-Date Condition Report and it was distributed to all area exceptional education administrators. Some directors chose to assign staffing specialists to schools who had a large number of reported outdated items. Others wrote letters to principals whose on-line compliance was low; the remaining directors took the position that ESE data entry was the responsibility of the school site administrator.

During the first year ISIS was used to store ESE information, data entry clerks reported a number of problems which occurred while trying to enter data. The two problems which were reported most frequently involved embedded computer restraints. For example, the computer was programmed to require information be entered in certain fields for all students enrolled in an ESE program. What the programmers did not realize was that certain ESE students qualify for services without being administered a test of intelligence; therefore it is impossible to enter an IQ score into the Special Services Screens. Other data entry problems were created because the necessary fields for recording information were not provided. For example, the Special Services Screen did not initially have a place to enter a dismissal date or that a child was ineligible for an ESE program. This caused many problems in the management of gifted program data. The IEP date for students who were no longer in attendance was reported as expired on the Out-of-Date Condition Report.

During the second year of implementation, the District Office for Exceptional Student Programs met with OIT staff, and different types of data entry problems were identified. An effort was also made to adapt the screens to the current ESE procedures and forthcoming state requirements. As a result of this meeting certain embedded restraints were lifted; however, restraints requiring that ESE information

be entered in sequential order were strengthened. Two new special services screens were added to ISIS, provisions to guard against unauthorized computer access were implemented, and a data input form was drafted. However, during the summer of 1989, OIT merged the SCM system with the Special Services screens to eliminate the recording of ESE data in two different data based management programs. Unfortunately, many schools lost previously entered data because of either embedded program restraints or because the information had been recorded incorrectly.

The use of DBMSs by the public school system is now in its third year of implementation. ISIS has been expanded to six screens, three of which were designed specifically to facilitate the retrieval of Special Services/ESE information. Schools had become less fearful of computers and often used it as their the primary source of information. Recent Out-of-Date Condition reports again confirmed that the timeliness and accuracy of ESE data entry had to be monitored closely by region administrators.

Problem Documentation

After every school was on-line with the mainframe, it was possible to retrieve current, past, and future information by accessing different DBMSs. Data entry clerks had begun updating student information on a regular basis. Many special education department heads and counselors, as well as office clerks, were authorized to enter ESE data into

the mainframe. Some administrators had begun requesting data based reports from OIT in order to save time and to help make important decisions. These computer generated print outs are referred to as "production" or "batch" reports. Some production reports can be completed in less than forty-eight hours, significantly reducing the amount of time required to collect data manually from weeks to days. However, the District Office of ESE had already been using production reports to evaluate a number of program variables including staff allocations, FTE, and federal and state funding. Modifications and enhancements were made which enabled the system to store more information, and as the data base grew the type and kind of production reports used to monitor ESE activities increased.

The production report that is most often used to assess the activities of the ESE Department is the Out-of-Date Condition Report. This printout is produced monthly and lists the students in each school whose reevaluation and/or IEP has expired. To evaluate the accuracy and timeliness of ESE data entry for schools in this region the total number of expired IEPs and reevaluations was recorded for eight consecutive months prior to implementation. An analysis of these figures showed that level of computer recordkeeping varied from month to month and from school to school. Some schools only had eight outdated items, others had as many as 175. Upon closer examination, the author found that there

was a direct relationship between the number of ESE students serviced at a school and the condition of special service and exceptional education data entered. For example, 53% of the schools that had a compliance level of less than 80% serviced between 55 to 99 elementary-aged students. Schools which had been classified as ESE Centers obtained a compliance level of between 80-89%, a pattern that was generally maintained in addition to servicing between 200-300 ESE students. However, the highest rate of compliance, 90% and above, was found to be characteristic of schools servicing between 100-149 ESE students. Table 1, Relation Between Program Compliance and ESE Enrollment contains a summary of these statistics.

Table 1

Relation Between Program Compliance and the Size of ESE Enrollment

	Compliance Levels:		
ESE Enrollment	0-79%	80-89%	90-100%
0-49	4	2	0
50-99	9	7	5
100-149	4	4	2
150-199	1	1	1
200-249	0	3	0
250-299	0	1	0
300 plus	0	1	0
Total Schools:	17	18	8

One production report which is sent exclusively to schools is the Edit Correction Report. Its purpose is to identify previously entered ESE data which is either incorrect or missing. A review of the November 1989 report indicated that the highest number of recorded errors was 77, the lowest was 7. However, most of the problems cited in the Edit Correction Report of 5/1/90 were also documented in the Out-of-Date Condition Report. Three of these items are the child's primary exceptionality, IEP conference date, and date of evaluation. Nevertheless, coded error messages are used only in the Edit Correction Report. They explain the type of data adjustment needed to correct the errors reported. Teachers are expected to submit the necessary information by interpreting the numerical error messages prior to receiving the next month's report. Many of the items evaluated by the Edit Correction Report affect the amount of state funding the county receives. A great deal of time is spent making the necessary the corrections, especially prior to an FTE survey week.

The third and most recently created batch report is the ESE Service Events Report. This printout summarized the number of cases by the type of testing recommended by the Child Study Team (CST) and the last referral activity entered into the computer. It also included the total number of cases logged at each stage of the evaluation process. These five activities are the CST date, the Outcome code

(type of testing), and the date the case is opened, evaluated, and closed. However, it should be noted that the program used to run this report was not able to distinguish between cases in which the referral process was not complete and those that did not require psychological testing. Therefore, gifted and speech reevaluations are often not included in production reports because an evaluation date or a case opened/closed date was not entered.

An analysis of the region's ESE Service Events Report indicated that only 39%, (258 out of 666) of the cases that had been brought before CST between July of 1989 and February of 1990 had been entered correctly in the system. A hand count of the average number of cases opened monthly in the region was found to be 135, therefore it is unlikely that the figure for cases to be opened, 408, was incorrect on the February 1990, ESE Service Events Report. Another statistic which seems to be inconsistent with the actual amount of student services taking place in the schools is the total number of CSTs reported to have taken place from July of 1989 to January of 1990. According to the ESE Service Events Report, 666 were cases were brought before the CST. However, if one makes the assumption that 135 cases are opened for testing each month, then a minimum of 945 cases should have been entered in the Special Services Screen (PF 16).

This type of discrepancy usually occurs because either schools have not entered information in the correct sequential order or had not entered the information until after the staffing. The later of these two reasons results in data being input three to six months after the services have been received. When reports produce statistics which do not approximate what is happening it is important to investigate the situation by collecting data manually.

The events leading to the district-wide implementation of DBMS demonstrates a strong commitment to computerizing the recordkeeping process. The usefulness of batch reports as a decision making tool is unquestioned. However, because schools are still learning about the process of data entry, the use of information on production reports still needs to be verified with school site personnel. The amount of ESE activity reported monthly is often underestimated. Therefore, this author has chosen to investigate strategies for increasing the timeliness and accuracy of data entry. If this project is successful computerized reports will become more valid, and therefore, more useful.

Causative Analysis

According to this author, there are four problems which have contributed to the incorrect and untimely entry of ESE data. The availability of appropriate data entry inservice training was one of the first problems observed. During the early phases of computerization, workshops dealing with on-

line applications were scheduled after the changes in data entry had been implemented. These programming modifications were often state mandated and resulted in additional elements being added to the Special Services/ESE Screens. Training sessions were held in school auditoriums and usually 50 or more people were in attendance. Therefore, the use of computers during instruction was not possible. However, the presenters were usually very familiar with ESE terminology, even though they lacked actual data entry experience. Little time was left for questions and answers, and the handling of questions pertaining to actual data entry problems was awkward at best. Participants often left with a feeling of information overload and an increased level of anxiety.

A second factor which affected the accuracy of data entry was a person's familiarity with ESE terminology and student service activities. Observations have shown that people who do not come from a special education background lack the ability to find their own data entry errors. They are also have difficulty distinguishing between similar types of activities. For example, screening instruments and a test of intelligence involve evaluation. However, an evaluation date is only entered when a psychological is administered. Even people with years of experiences in ESE acknowledge that it is an area which is inundated by technical terminology. The state and the federal government

are constantly adding new phrases to help enforce the conditions outlined in P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. Therefore, it is not unusual to find that a person's ability to enter ESE data correctly is closely linked to their understanding of special education.

Supervision is another element which is critical to the maintenance of on-line ESE information. Schools with compliance levels over 80% had established a plan for ensuring that the ESE Department implemented activities in a timely manner. People working in the department knew what their responsibilities were, when to schedule IEP conferences, and how to submit data entry worksheets. Timelines had been established to ensure that every child had a current IEP and reevaluation. Plans were also made to schedule events prior to the expiration date on these documents. Effective administrators had even identified someone in the building to serve as the LEA (Local Education Agent) Representative. This person was given the responsibility of verifying that information on the IEP was correct, signing the IEP as the LEA Representative, ensuring that CST-Rs and annual IEP conferences were held in a timely manner, and that information submitted to the data entry clerk was correct.

Administrators in schools with a high level of compliance also reported that information about a teacher's

ability to complete tasks in a timely manner was reported on an ESE teacher's classroom observation.

Schools with a large number of expired items on the Out-of-Date Condition Report were found to be very unorganized. Their ESE staff was often unable to describe what procedures were being used to coordinate special education activities in their department. When interviewed, many data entry clerks stated that the entering of ESE information did not take priority over other data entry tasks. Since the accuracy and timeliness of ESE data can affect everyone in the district, school administrators must take the role of supervising special education activities more seriously.

The one factor which has been reduced significantly over the last three years is the availability of computer terminals. All schools currently have at least one, although more are needed in ESE Centers, large secondary programs, and gifted centers. Some schools have even purchased personal computers (PCs) with telecommunications boards so that they can perform other tasks in addition to data entry and retrieval.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The maintenance of student records is a problem which is germane to all school districts. However, the three factors which most often influenced the way schools approached this problem were: the size of a school district,

the amount of space available to house student folders, and the type of reports kept on file. Some school systems who have chosen to solve this problem by automating their recordkeeping procedures. Initially this involves coding the narrative contained in a student's school folder. The documents most often targeted for data entry include: grade transcripts, attendance records, health records, discipline reports, and ESE documents. There are also schools who still record all transactions manually and have not established a consistent method of filing. Knowing this, it is not difficult to understand why some administrative offices maintain a duplicate set of student folders. Unfortunately, these folders often represent the only complete record of information on a child. Their use is indispensable during state audits, legal proceedings, and due process hearings and for replacing missing school documents.

Arvid Nelson, the superintendent of the Indian Springs School District in Chicago, described his recordkeeping process before using computers as one involving "paper trails of enormous length and complexity" (McCarthy, 1989, p. 6). According to Nelson (1989), it was not unusual, to find "different parts of student records scattered in different parts of file cabinets in different departments" (McCarthy, p.5). Administrators also observed that updating student files manually was not only a time consuming procedure, it

involved "a lot of busy work" (Shalvoy & Morgan, 1989, p.16). It also was not cost effective (Barbour, 1987). Reasons which are most often given for computerizing student recordkeeping are "the pressure to save time, reduce paperwork, and increase efficiency" (Barbour, 1987, p. 19). McCarthy (1989), on the other hand, is more concerned with being able to meet "increasing state record requirements," (p.7).

In 1987, Electronic Learning surveyed its readership to find out "what" and "how" computer equipment was being used across the country. The two most significant findings were that a) the use and type of equipment being utilized by schools varied widely and b) every school district used computers in the front office (Barbour, 1987). According to the survey, "secretaries in 82% of the schools reported using computers, and teachers reported using computers 43% of the time for administrative purposes" (Barbour, 1987, p.19). These statistics demonstrate that school personnel are beginning to overcome their reluctance to use computers; a problem White (1984) identified as one of the major stumbling blocks confronted by ESE administrators.

While some schools are busy exploring the many uses of data bases, other educators are beginning the job of converting student information into encoded data. Al Swinyard, a school administrator in Pinellas County, Florida found that phase one, "turning information into data was

pure drudgery", in addition to being very time consuming (Shalvoy & Morgan, 1989, p. 16).

The correctness of data is something which must be closely monitored by those assigned the job of implementing computerized student recordkeeping. Most often, mistakes that take place during the initial phase of data entry are the fault of "human error" (White 1984). This can occur when a "computer operator presses the wrong key or issues the wrong command" (White, 1984, p.3). These mishaps often result in information being deleted or information being sent to the wrong location. Situations like these underscore the need for strong security measures which are able to protect confidential student information.

In 1986, Smith conducted a study which involved converting student referral information from nine ESE departments in California into encoded data. The first problem she had to resolve was how to process the enormous amount of information contained in each child's referral packet. As a result of analyzing several folders, Smith decided only to convert certain types of information. These items included the student's academic performance levels, medical information, and teacher observations. Then Smith developed a coding system to translate the encoded information. During the last stage of the project, a data entry work sheet was developed to record the translated

information. The information on these forms would later be entered into the mainframe computer.

While some states struggle with the problems related to phase one, coding student information, others are experiencing the advantages of phase two, manipulating data. In Canada for example, a DBMS system has been used to monitor the amount and the delivery of direct and indirect services received by ESE students. This DBMS also is programmed to produce summary reports for an identified set of variables. These requests can be made on-line. Screens were also developed for employees to record the type of activities and amount of time spent completing tasks every month (Corvine, 1978).

Another computer application being experimented with by school psychologists is the scoring and interpreting of psychoevaluations. In a recent article, Fifield (1989) cited four reasons why the Department of Student Services should pursue the use of this type of computer software. His reasons simply stated are:

> 1) many psychologists lack familiarity with a testing instrument; 2) multiple-scaled instruments are complicated and time consuming to administer, score, and interpret; 3) more students can be tested with complex measurement approaches; and 4) the increasing number of students to be tested can be managed in a more timely manner (Fifield, 1989, p. 137).

If over time this software is able to increase the number of children being evaluated without jeopardizing the

validity of scoring, it has much to offer the field of psychometrics.

The amount of software being designed for administrative uses in education is also increasing. This is especially true in the field of special education. Currently there are programs available for writing IEPs (Jenkins, 1987) and monitoring a school's compliance with state and federal laws (White, 1984). There are even programs designed to analyze staff allocations; however, they are not available because they are still being piloted (McCarthy, 1989).

Although problems related to security, computer resistance, and logistics still exist, there seems to be strong evidence that indicates there are many advantages for computerizing student recordkeeping procedures (White, 1984). Teachers and administrators alike have found that the ability to retrieve student information while conducting parent conferences is especially helpful (Barbour, 1987; McCarthy, 1989). Counselors who are using DBMSs to assist in course advisement and the preparation of master schedules report being able to better meet the needs of the students (Shalvoy & Morgan, 1989). Administrators who are using DBMSs have documented being able to employ fewer people, spend more time on meaningful tasks, and produce reports that were not possible previously (Barbour, 1989). Computers have given their users a new sense of power in the workplace. The ability

to save time and increase productivity are features which makes the use of DBMSs attractive, but administrators must also recognize that the information stored in a computer's memory is only as good as the accuracy and timeliness of the data.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

There are two primary goals and four ancillary objectives that were projected for this practicum. One of the primary goals was to increase the accuracy of ESE data entered into the Special Services Screens in ISIS, the DBMS used to store information about students enrolled in exceptional education programs. The second goal was to reduce the amount of time needed to enter and update ESE data in the mainframe.

Behavioral Objectives

The behavioral objectives stated below have been designed to address problems associated with the accuracy and timeliness of data entry. These include:

1. Sending written correspondence during the second month of implementation to all schools which have been documented on the Out-of-Date Condition Report as having less than 80% compliance for a minimum of two consecutive months.

2. Increasing the noninstructional staff's understanding of ESE terminology used during data entry to 80%, which will be measured on a post-assessment instrument administered after the hands-on inservice training during the third month of implementation.

3. Reducing the total number of expired gifted IEP's and reevaluations in the region by 20% through the use of inservice training and onsite assistance for teachers of the gifted.

4. Using coded data entry sheets and inservice training to increase the number schools achieving and maintaining 80% compliance by 20% which will be documented by recording information from the Out-of-Date Condition Report monthly.

Measurement of Objectives

A variety of strategies were implemented to demonstrate the mastery of each behavioral objective. During the first phase of this practicum, written correspondence was used to communicate the level of compliance for each of the 45 schools in the region. The Exceptional Student IEP and Evaluation Status Report, which hereafter will be referred to as the Out-of-Date Condition Report, was used to identify which schools had been documented as having a large number of outdated IEPs and reevaluations during the 1989-90 school year. While recording the number of expired IEPs and reevaluations, it became clear that the number of items reported as missing or outdated did not reflect a school's true level of compliance. However, the author found that by comparing the number of current IEPs and reevaluations with the total number of

students enrolled in ESE classes and those receiving related services was a more valid indicator of data entry activity at a school. Therefore, schools which had less than 80% compliance for two or more consecutive months were targeted. By the end of June, 23 schools were identified as having met the criteria in Objective 1. The list of targeted schools was also analyzed to ensure that the formula did not unfairly discriminate against schools with either very small or very large ESE populations.

During the first month of this project, all schools received written documentation of their compliance for the months of May and June of 1990 in a letter from the region office. This memorandum explained that schools which had two consecutive months with less than 80% compliance would be monitored more closely. Principals were also advised to review and implement the list of selected strategies which were designed to reduce the amount of ESE items not entered in a timely manner. This communication was used to met the requirement stated in Objective 1.

This author's experience has shown that there is a direct correlation between a person's knowledge about special education and the accuracy of the ESE data they enter. In order to meet the criteria in Objective 2, a pretest was designed to assess the current level skills of people working in the field. Terminology from the data input form for Student/ESE Services was used to compile sixteen

multiple-choice statements. Five survey questions were also included to gather information about a school's data entry style. These pretests were sent through the school mail and a self-addressed envelope was enclosed. By July 31, 1990, 50% of the schools in the region had returned their questionnaires, and after reviewing the results of the pretest, the author felt there was ample data to design an effective hands-on inservice training.

The next step involved computing the mean level of correctness for each item in the Survey of Data Entry Procedures and Assessment of ESE Terminology (see Appendix B). An item analysis was performed to help identify key concepts related to ESE terminology and data entry procedures which were poorly understood by a majority (60%) of the respondents.

An analysis of the questions missed on the pretest seemed to indicate that designing a separate posttest instrument would yield more valid results than readministering the pretest. Additional pretests were given to people employed in different positions at ESE Center schools and to staffing specialists to rule out which questions were missed due to unclear wording. Recent changes in data entry procedures were also incorporated into the posttest which included 13 multiple-choice items. If the goal of Objective 2 is achieved, the mean score on the posttest will be increased to 80%.

During the second month of implementation all schools and placement specialists received two styles of data input forms. Schools which were identified as having less than 80% compliance received assistance in the correct use of these forms by a region staffing specialist. ESE Departments were encouraged to select the data entry form that best suited their needs. A meeting was also held with the Head Speech Chairperson to identify schools which had an excessive number of outdated speech and language IEPs. Schools which had raised their level of compliance to 80% within the first month of implementation received a congratulatory phone call. Phone conferences were also held with the principals of schools whose level of compliance had significantly dropped during the second month to determine what type of further assistance was needed. The goal of Objective 4 was to increase the number of schools in the region who have achieved and maintained 80% compliance by 20%.

Baseline data collected from the Out-of-Date Condition Report also showed that there was a large number of expired gifted IEPs and reevaluations for the region. Further analysis showed that 19% of the total number of out-of-compliance items were related to students enrolled in gifted programs; a problem addressed in Objective 3. By comparing the number outdated annual IEPs with the number of outdated reevaluations the author was able to deduce that teachers of

the gifted did not understand the gifted reevaluation procedures. A workshop was provided to address four areas: reevaluation procedures, use of the data input form, how to use the different Special/ESE Services Screens, and how to retrieve information using PARIS. Documentation of improvement was accomplished by tallying the total number of IEPs and reevaluations reported on the Out-of-Date Condition Report monthly. By the third month of implementation, it was hoped that the total number of outdated gifted items in the region would be reduced by 20%.

Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events

As in any well-planned project, one must anticipate the unexpected. In order to record unplanned events, a log sheet and an annotated calendar were kept. Problems which happened unexpectedly were also shared immediately with the Region Coordinating Principal for Exceptional Student Education. The office staff was asked to record any phone calls related to this project on a special "complaint" form. These sheets were reviewed daily to monitor the occurrence of unforeseeable problems.

Description of Plans for Analyzing Results

During the implementation of this practicum proposal a variety of data collection instruments were used. In Objective 1, the author developed a formula for computing compliance by comparing the number of current IEPs and

reevaluations with the total number of students who are either enrolled in ESE classes or are receiving related services only. Schools which had a minimum of two consecutive months of less than 80% compliance were targeted to receive assistance. A chart was made to identify which schools needed to be monitored monthly.

The goal of Objective 2 was to increase the understanding of ESE terminology by noninstructional personnel, i.e. data entry clerks. As previously mentioned, a pre-assessment survey was disseminated to all data entry clerks during the first month of implementation. The mean level of correctness was computed for each item on the pretest to help identify which concepts were unclear to the respondents. Questions which had a mean correctness score of 60% or less were identified as areas needing remediation. After the hands-on inservice training had taken place the posttest was administered. In order to meet the criteria identified in Objective 2, 50% or more of the data entry clerks would have to achieve a score of 80% or higher on the post assessment.

In Objective 3, the use of inservice training, onsite assistance, and data entry forms were used to reduce the number of expired IEPs and reevaluations being cited monthly in the Out-of-Condition Report. Staffing specialists were asked to schedule staffings for any student who was no longer attending a gifted program during the second and

third month of implementation. In order to meet the requirement stated in Objective 3, the total number of IEPs and reevaluations for gifted students in the region had to be reduced by 20%.

The goal of Objective 4 was to increase the number of schools able to achieve and maintain 80% compliance within the three month implementation period by 20%. In Objective 1, 23 schools were identified as not being able to enter IEP and reevaluation dates in a timely manner. One month later three schools were added. The compliance level of schools targeted to receive assistance was recorded monthly. To meet the requirements stated in Objective 4 the number of schools achieving and maintaining 80% compliance would have to be increased by 20% or 4 schools.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

According to the literature, the ability to increase the timeliness and accuracy of data entry is a problem that faces schools, as well as corporations. Although, the process of computerizing recordkeeping procedures is not new, the number of published articles on this topic is limited. Most of the research currently available has either been written by district level administrators or computer programmers. Another characteristic shared by all the authors was their involvement with DBMSs. Many of the studies reported had been locally or nationally funded, and even though each person approached their project differently, their solutions were very similar. Four of the strategies proposed by these authors directly involved the process of data entry. These strategies included coding narrative information into data (Smith, 1986), using a data entry form (Smith, 1986; Corvine, et al., 1978; Hoffman, 1988), staff training and education (White, 1984; Fazio & Polsgrove, 1989) and conducting a needs assessment of current operations (White, 1984; Dan, 1975).

Although their treatment of the subject differed, all the writers agreed that one of the first steps in automating recordkeeping should be the coding of printed information.

In the study conducted by Smith (1986), a coding system was established to translate the narrative content contained in 216 ESE referral packets. Decisions also had to be made about what pieces of information needed to be stored in the mainframe (Shalvoy & Morgan, 1989). Folders selected for analysis had to be judged "substantially complete". This requirement was satisfied if "partial information in one part of a given record could be completed by direct transcription of explicit and relevant information from another part(s) of the record" (Smith, 1986, p.7).

During this study measures were quickly taken to ensure the confidentiality and internal consistency of the information being analyzed. The later was accomplished by holding coders responsible for correcting errors on student documents and retrieving missing information. This measure probably increased the accuracy of data being entered into the computer more than any other variable.

However, this author found the list of codes used by Smith (1986) was lengthy and its purpose unclear. For example, the "Summary Listing of Student 'Problem' Characteristics, Modifications/Interventions and Modification/Intervention Ratings" [Form 12] contained 21 codes. Staff working with the form reported that it was " too time-consuming and redundant" (p. 13). As a result of this, Smith (1986) reported that the use of Form 12, had been eliminated. However, the use of Form 13, the Individual

Student Record Form was continued. Although slightly shorter than Form 12, it had fifteen categories of "student problem characteristics" (Smith, 1986, p.22). Smith (1986) also observed that an extensive amount of time was spent deciding how to design a data entry form because "no tested data collection instruments [were] available for use or adaptation" (p. 4). Being one of the first federally funded projects on ESE data collection had its drawbacks, but, a review of coding structures used by other researchers two years later showed that there were more concise and relevant data entry forms being used.

Corvine, McCormick, & Rudolph (1978) approached the task of coding much more logically. Their study used only three data collection sheets and each page of the reporting form contained only those items necessary to identify a child's ESE placement. Directions on how to complete the forms were concise and understandable. They also devised different activity codes for each exceptionality, but the structure of each event remained constant from screen to screen. Dan (1975) also found that the use of parallel information structures increased the accuracy of data being entered. However, the strongest feature of Dan's coding system was that it had been adapted to meet certain state requirements in student and teacher information. "The mandate also required that the data be sent electronically to the state on a regular basis via the Florida Information Resource Network (FIRN)" (Sahlvoy & Morgan, 1989, p. 14).

This author found that the coding system developed by Corvine (et al., 1978) had three distinct features which directly applied to this practicum. These characteristics were 1) the coding system could be modified easily, 2) staff training required very little time, and 3) codes were grouped logically, or "clustered".

Another strategy which has been effectively used to manage automated recordkeeping procedures is the use of data entry forms. Hoffman (1988) suggested that "entry forms should make...[inputting data]...as easy as possible" (p.6). The author also felt that these forms would be more helpful if they had the same appearance as the screens viewed on the terminals.

The use of programming constraints or control features is another solution suggested for increasing the accuracy of data entry (Hoffman, 1988). These programmed commands are used in DBMSs to check the correctness of specific data transactions and to control the type of information that can be entered. Embedded commands are also used for finding typographical errors and restraining entries where data is entered out-of-sequence. When these types of mistakes are identified by the system, a prompt appears on the screen which explains to the user why the data entry cannot be accepted. Sometimes these prompts instruct the user to use a help screen, or window, to get further information. This eliminates interruptions while working on a project.

approach has many beneficial outcomes. Some of these include:

1) enhancing timeliness, validity, and accuracy of data by eliminating duplicate entries,

2) improving data security

3) eliminating concurrent data update conflicts (p.3).

White (1984) is more of a humanist, than an analyst when it comes to introducing computers to ESE staff. He feels that the purchase of computer equipment should result in the planning of an "ideal work station, an area typified by an interconnectedness between its parts" (White, 1984, p.14). He also suggested that access to a "toll-free Help WATTS line" be made available to school personnel (White, 1984, p. 16). White was also concerned about helping people overcome their fear or resistance to using computers. Strategies recommended to solve this problem included guidelines for purchasing software, the development of training and education programs, and the involvement of junior level administrators. The author also felt that the administrator "in charge of setting up a...computer system become involved with the ins and outs of the programs" (White, 1984).

Some strategies which do not appear in the literature, but might motivate school administrators and their staff to use DBMSs more effectively are:

1) awarding professional incentive credits for computer classes and technical training,

DBMSs can also be programmed to disallow the viewing of information which is accomplished by issuing different levels of clearance and/or passwords. This is primarily done to ensure the confidentiality of protected information, i.e. test scores or IQ scores. On-line programs can also be programmed not to accept events which will take place in the future. This also aids the monitoring of ESE activities which must take place according to a predetermined expiration date. Allowing users to enter events which have not occurred often leads to the abuse of data. Computers can even control the size of a field, or the number of elements entered. For example, our DBMS requires that IQ scores be entered as three digit numbers. Two of the most important reasons for using programmed controls are that it allows self-correction while on-line and that it increases the correctness of information being stored in the system.

Data entry forms can also increase the accuracy of information entered, although Fitterman (1988) suggests that an "ends-to-means" approach be implemented first. This technique involves the systematic analysis of an institution's total computer activities. Attention is given to "data currently in use, the way it is used, and where and how it originated" (Dan, 1975, p.2). Copies of reports are analyzed, categories of information contained in each report are reviewed, and the logical sequence of data entry is observed (Fitterman, 1988). These activities require a lot of time, but Dan (1975) suggests that an "ends-to-means"

2) providing personal computers for the staff members to use at home,
3) establishing a computer "buddy" system,
4) creating a DBMS task force which meets regularly,
5) developing a career ladder for data entry personnel,
6) designing an observation form to evaluate the effectiveness of data entry procedures being implemented at a school site.

Description of Selected Solution

Each of the solutions found in the literature had features which would most likely lead to the reduction of problems associated with data entry. However, many of these solutions did not take into account: 1) the varied job levels of people involved in using DBMSs, 2) differences in computer expertise, and 3) the impact that inaccurate data can have on educational decision making.

Therefore, this author has chosen to develop a data entry form which can be used by employees regardless of their position, understanding of ESE terminology, or experience with computers. The first element identified for inclusion on the data input form was a signature section. This would inform the data entry clerk that someone had verified that the information being submitted had been checked for accuracy. Space was also provided so that the data entry clerk could sign-off and date when the information had been inputted into the system.

This author also felt that providing help menus on the data input sheet would reduce errors being made during data entry. These help menus included groups of clustered codes for all transactions taking place on the Student/ESE Services Screens. Each list of codes was presented in the order it was needed and translations were given for all of the codes used in ISIS (see Appendix B). The county's DBMS includes these same help menus on-line. Unfortunately, the retrieval of these screens is controlled by the program you are in, and accessing a help menu means the user must leave the screen where he/she is working. However, once a help screen is retrieved, the user can view, or scroll one page of information up or down at a time. The PA2 help menu contains six screens of ESE codes and response time to queries is often slow. Therefore, the use of help screens is usually more time consuming than it is helpful.

The data entry form designed by this author replicated the way each screen appeared to the user, a feature recommended by Hoffman (1988). Each section of the form was labeled with the name and number of the screen where information had to be entered. Blanks were left to fill in the information in the same sequence in which it needed to be inputted.

The Data Input Record Sheet (see Appendix B) also used an original coding system created by the author to classify each student services and ESE activity. These codes appeared in the left hand margin and were used to help ESE

teachers identify what types of information had to be submitted after an activity. The codes used were as follows: I, initial staffing; R, reevaluation staffing; O, alternative education/opportunity school staffing; A, annual IEP conference; and D, dismissal staffing.

During the preparation of materials for the data entry workshop the Data Input Record Sheet was reviewed by OIT and MIS personnel. Both agreed that the form appeared to have many beneficial characteristics. In fact, the form which was recently produced by OIT contained an overwhelming majority of features included in the data entry created by this author during this practicum.

Training in the correct use of the data input sheet was provided for ESE related staff during the hands-on computer inservice training. Activities during the training sessions included having each participant fill-out the data entry form after reading a short vignette.

Report of Action Taken

Once the practicum proposal had been approved, the following activities were implemented.

ACTIVITIES SCHEDULED DURING JULY

Week 1: July 2-6

The pre-assessment/survey was sent to all schools in the region.

The Out-of-Condition Report was reviewed and the ESE enrollment figures were compiled for all schools with less than 80% compliance.

Week 2: July 9-13
Letters were sent to all principals stating their school's level of compliance for May and June. Strategies for reducing the number of expired items at each were also included.

Copies of the preassessment/survey were sent to all data entry clerks through school mail.

ACTIVITIES SCHEDULED DURING AUGUST

Week 3: July 30-August 3
The results of the pre-assessment/survey were collated and schools which had not returned their form were contacted by phone.

Week 4: August 27-30
A meeting was held with placement specialists to identify which schools needed assistance with their ESE data entry and the Data Input Record Sheet was distributed.

Data entry sheets were sent to all schools.

ACTIVITIES SCHEDULED DURING SEPTEMBER

Week 5: Sept. 10-14
A planning session was held with OIT and MIS personnel to plan for the inservice training sessions and dates for the inservice training were identified.

Week 6: Sept. 17-20

Memorandums about the inservice training for data entry clerks and teachers of the gifted were submitted for approval.

Week 7: Sept. 24-28
Materials for the gifted inservice training were prepared.

ACTIVITIES SCHEDULED DURING OCTOBER

Week 8: Oct. 1-5
Inservice training was held for teachers of the gifted.

* Due to administrative changes in the region office, activities were delayed for the following 3 weeks.

Week 9: Oct. 9-12
Reviewed Out-of-Condition report for September for all targeted schools and the gifted, computed new compliance levels and adjusted ESE enrollment figures.

Second set of compliance letters were prepared.

Practicum Progress Report was submitted.

Materials for the data entry inservice were prepared.

Week 11: Oct. 16-19
Hands-on training was conducted for all data entry clerks and ESE Department Chairpersons.

An additional inservice training session was scheduled for staffing specialists and psychologists.

Revised data input forms were distributed to all schools.

Week 12: Oct. 23-Nov.1
The October Out-of-Condition Report was reviewed and compliance levels for all targeted schools were recorded.

Materials were prepared and hands-on training were held for region staffing specialists and psychologists.

Onsite assistance was provided to all gifted programs requesting further training in IEP writing and reevaluation procedures.

Phone conferences were held with the principals of all targeted schools who had not achieved or maintained 80% compliance.

A memorandum summarizing the results of the study was submitted for approval.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The management of data based student information is a problem which affects "program evaluation, productivity measures, budgeting, and accountability in institutions of higher learning,". (Dan, 1975, p.2). To identify the problems that schools most often faced, information was collected from the survey questions on the pretest and the number of expired and missing elements on the Out-of-Date Condition Reports from November of 1989 to June of 1990.

According to the results, there were five underlying conditions which were impeding the data entry process. These included: 1) a lack of hands-on inservice training, 2) poor understanding of ESE terminology and data entry procedures, 3) ineffective supervision by school administrators, 4) unawareness of timelines, and 5) the absence of a DBMS reference manual. These problems were identified by using research. However, the solutions submitted on the survey section of the pretest correlated highly. They are listed below from most popular to least popular: established procedures for using data entry sheets (28%), hands-on inservice (27%), coded data input sheet (24%), and administrative verifications of ESE information on data entry sheet (18%). After correlating the lists of problems and solutions, the author concluded that designing a data

input sheet and providing hands-on inservice training would most likely increase the timeliness and accuracy of ESE data entry.

The goal of Objective 1 was to send written correspondence to all schools who had been documented as having less than 80% compliance for two consecutive months. Schools who meet this criteria were identified by a formula designed to evaluate compliance levels. The steps involved: 1) totaling the number of children enrolled in ESE programs at each school, 2) eliminating the total number of IEPs and reevaluations that had not expired from those listed on the monthly Out-of-Date Condition Report, and then 3) dividing the total number of current IEPs and reevaluations by the total number of ESE students.

After recording compliance levels for three months, 23 out of 45 schools in the region were identified as meeting the criteria in Objective 1. That is, 49% of the schools in the region had a compliance level of 80% or higher without the use of intervention strategies. Table 2, Identification of Schools with Less than 80% Compliance and Recommended Strategies summarizes these results.

In order to meet the second condition identified in Objective 1, letters explaining the Out-of-Date Condition Report were sent to all school in the region. The compliance level for May and June was also noted for schools with less than 80%. The recommendations included in the letter

Table 2

Identification of Schools with Less than 80% Compliance and Recommended Strategies

SCHOOL	ESE #s	MONTHLY COMPLIANCE MAY	MONTHLY COMPLIANCE JUNE	RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES 1	2	3	4	5
A	47	54%	66%					x
B	40	71%	75%					x
C	215	79%	70%					x
D	36	59%	50%		x			x
E	104	81%	77%				x	x
F	44	66%	50%		x			x
G	41	77%	66%					x
H	76	77%	70%				x	x
I	114	70%	66%					x
J	94	77%	64%			x	x	x
K	44	75%	66%					
L	91	75%	71%		x			x
M	66	66%	68%		x			x
N	47	75%	79%		x			x
O	41	76%	78%					x
P	136	56%	58%					x
Q	68	66%	66%			x		
R	63	67%	56%					x
S	184	60%	53%					x
R	228	69%	45%					x

ESE #s=number of students enrolled in ESE/related programs.

were as follows: 1) request current IEP and reevaluation dates from the speech pathologist, 2) request annual IEP dates from the appropriate gifted center, 3) send a list of all gifted students with expired reevaluation dates to the appropriate gifted center/program, 4) require that all special education teachers submit missing ESE information on the data entry form, and 5) implement data entry procedures for special student services and ESE activities. These suggestions were referred to by numbered columns on the far right in Table 2.

The aim of Objective 2 was to increase the data entry clerks knowledge of ESE terminology and data entry procedures to 80%. After the inservice training a posttest was administered to all the participants. According to the results, the mean score of 58 on the pretest had been raised to 95, an increase of 37%. Therefore, the criteria in the second objective had been greatly exceeded. See Table 3, Performance Scores of Data Entry Clerks Before and After Instruction.

This gain was achieved by providing inservice training on concepts that were poorly understood on the pretest. The author felt that those items which were found to be answered correctly by less than 70% of this group should be used for developing instructional activities. The eight questions identified appear in Table 4, Percentage of Correct Responses to Topics Covered by Pretest Questions. The item analysis also demonstrated that at least three of

Table 3

Performance Scores of Data Entry Clerks Before and After Instruction

Evaluation Instrument	Performance Scores		
	Mean	Median	Mode
Pretest	58	54	46,69
Posttest	95	92	100

the questions on the pretest might not be valid indicators of ESE/data entry knowledge. For example, in question 7, the response "all of the above" was omitted as one of the answers. To compensate people circled a variety of answers, others wrote in "all of the above". In question 6, the answers were no longer appropriate because dismissal procedures had been changed. Some people were aware of this, others were not. Since this information had not been widely disseminated, these scores were not included in the mean. Question 16, although not eliminated, was found to be unclear. Many people understood that full-time ESE students must have more than 12 hours of class contact, but may not receive more than 25 hours. Elementary and secondary personnel reacted differently. Most people who understood the concept wrote in a response; almost any approximation of full-time criteria was accepted. Therefore, the pretest was

Table 4

Percentage of Correct Responses to Topics Covered by Pretest Questions

QUES #	TOPIC	CORRECT RESPONSES
6	Entering Dismissal Information	4%
7	Entering Child as Eligible not Placed (N)	10%
8	Entering than One FEFP/ESE Program	31%
9	Definition of Outcome Code	59%
10	Correct Order of Referral Activities	59%
11	Entering Gifted Reevaluation Information	31%
12	Definition of Eligibility Determination Date	95%
13	Definition of Placement Date	82%
14	Entering IQ Scores	86%
15	Criteria for Exiting a Program	68%
16	Contact Hrs. for Full-Time ESE Students	23%
17	Possible Testing Recommendations (Outcomes)	86%
18	Entering Temporary Placement Data	9%
19	Data Entry Items for Eligible Not Placed	41%

Note. Questions 6 and 7 were not included in computing individual pretest scores.

revised into a separate posttest instrument. A summary of the item analysis for the pretest can be found in Table 4, Percentage of Correct Responses to Topics Covered by Pretest Questions.

The emphasis in Objective 3 was to reduce the total number of outdated gifted IEPs and reevaluations for the

region by 20%. Onsite assistance, data entry workshops, and inservice training were used. During the months of implementation, the total number of expired items was reduced from 152 in June, to 74 items by October, a decrease of 49%. Therefore, the criteria set in Objective 3 were exceeded by 29%. A summary of these changes appears in Table 5, Total Number of Expired Gifted IEPs and Reevaluations Reduced Over Four Months.

Table 5

Total Number of Expired Gifted IEPs and Reevaluations Reduced Over Four Months

	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.
Outdated Items	152	131	109	121	74
Amt. Reduced	(Baseline)	14%	28%	20%	51%

During the initial month of data collecting, July, the Out-of-Date Condition Report cited 152 expired gifted IEPs and reevaluations. This made up approximately 17% of the total number of out-of-compliance items for the region. After interviewing different gifted teachers and administrators, the author realized that summer was going to be a difficult time to implement. Many teachers of the gifted do not work in the summer, nor do many data entry clerks. It was decided that the workshop should be scheduled in October shortly after the gifted programs opened. Attendance by the middle schools was poor.

Onsite assistance was arranged for all teachers who had not attended the workshop.

Despite these problems letters about their compliance and the number of outdated gifted IEPs and reevaluations continued to decrease monthly. After one month, the total number of expired items had decreased 28%. However, in September the region opened five new programs, adding 163 new students. Many of the teachers hired to work at these programs were not certified. It was not unusual that the number of outdated items had increased by 8% in September. By the end of October, the number of expired items had been reduced to 74, a total decrease of 51%. This confirmed that the criteria in Objective 3 had been exceeded.

Objective 4 focused on increasing the number of schools achieving and maintaining 80% compliance by 20%. Inservice training and the Data Input Record Sheet were used as the main intervention strategies. These strategies helped increase the number of schools able to satisfy this goal by 38%.

After recording baseline scores in April, May and June, 22 of the 45 schools in the region were identified as having more than 80% compliance consistently. However, in July, three more schools were added to the list of targeted schools, bringing the total to 26 schools. For the next four months, the compliance formula was computed for each of the targeted school. This is noted in Table 6, Monthly Status Report of Schools with Less than 80% Compliance. Enrollment

Table 6

Monthly Status Report of Schools with Less than 80% Compliance

	Monthly Compliance Levels						
School	TESE[a]	July	Aug	TESE[b]	Sept	Oct	Status
A	47	64%	75%	60	75%	76%	*
B	40	96%	98%				OK
C	215	74%	81%	215	84%		OK
D	36	72%	83%	37	68%	76%	+1
E	104	68%	89%	100	88%		OK
F	44	74%	85%	61	95%		OK
G	41	87%	98%				OK
H	76	80%	96%				OK
I	114	82%	86%				OK
J	94	81%	92%				OK
K	44	68%	69%	32	91%	81%	OK
L	83	90%	95%				OK
M	77	90%	90%				OK
N	110	73%	82%	110	99%		OK
O	91	70%	70%	91	87%	89%	OK
P	66	70%	77%	66	62%	80%	+1
Q	47	81%	81%				OK
R	70	70%	86%	70	85%		OK
S	41	66%	80%	41	73%	83%	+1
T	107	79%	87%	143	90%		OK
U	169	87%	89%				OK
V	136	65%	82%	155	85%		OK
W	68	79%	76%	100	84%	80%	OK
X	63	52%	81%	154	92%	83%	OK
Y	184	77%	78%	215	78%	80%	+1
Z	228	90%	87%				OK

[a] TESE the total number of children enrolled in ESE or related programs in June. [b] TESE equals the total number of children on the ESE rolls in September.

figures listed under "TESE #s" were based on statistics collected in June. Growth was observed almost immediately. Within the first month, 10 schools had achieved 80% compliance. In August, another nine schools had achieved 80%. However, in September many schools who had met criteria began to show a decrease in their compliance level. Reports showed that the total number of outdated items for the region had been decreased from 1,083 to 568 within three months time. In September, after the Contact Hours Report was reviewed it became evident that enrollment figures for some schools had changed dramatically. Therefore, the ESE enrollment figures were recalculated for selected schools.

A review of each school's status at the end of October confirmed that 21 of 26 schools had met the criteria in Objective 4. These schools have an "OK" in the status column. The four schools (15%) who had achieved 80% compliance, but had not maintained it have been identified with a +1. Three percent (1) of the schools who never attained compliance were labeled with an *.

Discussion

The results of this practicum seem to indicate that the management of online data entry can be increased by involving administrators, setting program compliance levels, using data entry forms, and providing hands-on inservice.

During Objective 1 letters were sent to all principals making them aware of the status of their outdated IEPs and reevaluations. This was done so that school administrators would become more involved in ESE activities. Although they were not asked to identify strategies and/or weaknesses related to data entry, Perryman (1984) would have argued that administrators need to have "full responsibility for what is in a [school's] comprehensive plan and to identify weaknesses as well as strengths" (p. 8). White (1984) suggests when introducing computers to special educators, junior administrators should be involved. Hence, ESE Department Chairpersons, staffing specialists, and assistant principals were encouraged to attend inservice training. They were also told to call the region office if special assistance was needed at their school.

Edge (1985) felt that administrators needed to become more acclimated to using data and information systems to support school improvement and accountability. Therefore, activities which provided experiences in reviewing batch reports and production reports, using DBMS to make on-line queries, and accessing different information systems were included as part of all the inservice training sessions. This skill allows educators to monitor their school's "continuous progress toward meeting objectives" (Perryman, 1984, p.9).

The concept of monitoring was paramount to this project. Principals were called monthly and sent letters.

For example, if a school had met criteria, the principal was congratulated. When schools did not show growth, additional correspondence and phone call ensued. By the final months of the project most administrators had become more involved in the supervision of ESE activities at their school. This was substantiated by a reduction of out-of condition items reported over the last three months. Originally, the region had 1,083 expired items, but by the end of October that number had dropped to 736, a 32% decrease. The range of expired items had also dropped. In July it was not unusual for a secondary school to have over 100 expired items, but by the end of October the highest number of outdated items was 54.

The use of a pretraining assessment (Fazio & Polsgrove, 1989) and training and education (White, 1984) proved to be valuable tools for instruction. Each of these contributed to the successful increase of ESE terminology and related data entry procedures used by special education staff. The pretest was especially helpful in identifying areas for developing instructional activities. The survey questions provided the author with information about people's attitudes towards computers and the type of management styles that were being used for ESE data entry. The responses to the questionnaire also helped identify solutions. The audience felt the most beneficial solutions were: coded data entry sheets (24%), hands-on inservice training (27%), and data entry procedures (28%).

Training and educating staff are also important. White (1984) explains "training existing staff is your first and best line of defense against misuse, abuse, or not use of expensive and very useful equipment" (White, 1984, p. 9).

Another strategy stressed by Dan (1975) was the "end-to-means" method, a process for assessing the current operations and activities used with the DBMS. This according to White (1984) included learning about the "ins and outs of a program before asking employees to endure training" (p. 9). Meeting with members of OIT, MIS, and OTT helped the author inform data entry clerks about problems inherent in the system. This included functions that were not working properly, those that had not been activated, and those that were forthcoming.

The use of data entry sheets also worked well. These forms specified the size and format of each element (Dan, 1975) and permitted rapid sequential entry (Hoffman, 1988) of information that resembled the screen. Codes were clustered logically and by function (Corvine, et al, 1978) to reduce the amount of time spent retrieving information manually.

In conclusion, one must view the problem of using DBMS by schools as an area which requires that administrators be involved and be held accountable. It should be mandated that they attend computer inservice training too. Regardless of the level of the participants

training should be provided in an appropriate setting, one that removes the fears of using computers, is paced according to the level of experiences of the participants, and provides hands-on experiences. Also, data entry forms should be used to increase the flow of information between the staff and the data entry clerk. Their use can increase accuracy and timeliness during data entry.

Recommendation

The strategies used to affect data entry management proved to be effective during this practicum. However, many factors also presented obstacles during implementation. Therefore the following recommendations are being offered:

1) avoid implementing during the summer,
2) involve personnel from the departments of ESE and offices related to management information systems,
3) review the computer experience of the staff who will be participating in inservice training.

Based upon the results of this study a variety of activities have been scheduled. For example, the author has been asked to teacher at the Technological Training Center. Also, a special batch report is being created, the Gifted Out-of-Date Condition Report. The Department of Gifted and Allied Program is also planning to conduct workshops for administrators on gifted procedures.

Dissemination

Copies of this practicum report will be distributed to region and district administrators. These people include the Assistant Superintendent of Region Operations, the Director of Exceptional Student Education and Federal Programs, the Director of Student Services and Student Operations, and the Executive Director of Exceptional Student Education. Additional copies will be sent to directors in the Department of Technological Training and Manangement Information Systems.

If time permits this report will be adapted for conferences sponsored by the Technology and Media Division (TAM) of the Council for Exceptional Children. Plans are also being made to prepare an article for publication in the Journal of Special Education Technology.

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DATA INPUT RECORD SHEET
STUDENT SERVICES/EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT PROGRAMS

Directions: Please fill-in all items for each activity listed below according to the following coding system. After recording the necessary information, you need to get the appropriate signature(s) and then submitt this form to your data entry clerk.

I=INITIAL STAFFING A=ANNUAL IEP CONFERENCE
R=REEVALUATION STAFFINGS D=DISMISSAL STAFFINGS
O=SUSPENSIONS, OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL PLACEMENT

Student ID#__ __ __ __ __ __ __ Name_____, _____
(Last) (First)
Teacher_____ESE Program_____ESE Activity: I R O A D

This signature certifies that the data being submitted have been checked for accuracy and completeness.
Signature_____(AP/ESE DEPT. CHAIR)

ACTIVITY CODES — This section will be completed by the Region Office.

STUDENT SERVICES-PF16 SCREEN

EMPLOYEE NUMBER

I R	CST CONF (ALT STRAT)	MM/DD/YY	__ __/__ __/__ __	__ __ __ __ __ __
I R	CST CONF (EVAL REF)	MM/DD/YY	__ __/__ __/__ __	OUTCOME___*
I R	CASE OPENED	MM/DD/YY	__ __/__ __/__ __	__ __ __ __ __ __
I R	CURRENT EVALUATION	MM/DD/YY	__ __/__ __/__ __	__ __ __ __ __ __
I R	CASE CLOSED	MM/DD/YY	__ __/__ __/__ __	__ __ __ __ __ __

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*CST CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

G=GIFTED P=PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION S=SPEECH
M=MEDICAL R=REEVALUATION PSYCHOLOGICAL

ESE SERVICES-PF 17 SCREEN

I R A D O CURRENT EVALUATION IEP CONFERENCE MM/DD/YY ___/___/___
I R PRIMARY EXCEPTIONALITY ___ IQ___ ___ ___ SCALE___

FEEP/ESE PGM ___ ___ ___ PLACEMENT STATUS____ REASON

	INITIAL EVAL COMPLETION	MM DD YY	___/___/___
I	ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION	MM DD YY	___/___/___
	PLACEMENT DATE	MM DD YY	___/___/___
	DISMISSAL	MM DD YY	___/___/___

	PRIMARY EXCEPTIONALITY	FEEP/ESE PROGRAM
A	EDUCABLE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED	201
B	TRAINABLE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED	202
C	PHYSICALLY IMPAIRED	203
F	SPEECH IMPAIRED	205
G	LANGUAGE IMPAIRED	205
H	HARD OF HEARING	206
I	VISUALLY IMPAIRED	207(PT)/208(FT)
J	EMOTIONALLY HANDICAPPED	209(PT)/210(FT)
K	SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABLED	211(PT)/212(FT)
L	GIFTED	213(PT)/
N	PROFOUNDLY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED	215
O	DEAF/BLIND	206/207 OR 208
P	AUTISTIC	215
Q	SEVERELY EMOTIONALLY HANDICAPPED	215
R	DEAF	206

	RELATED SERVICES AND OTHER PROGRAMS	FEFP
D	OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY	204
E	PHYSICAL THERAPHY	204
M	HOSPITAL / HOMEBOUND	---

CST CONFERENCE OUTCOME			IQ SCALE	
G	GIFTED	P PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION	F	FULL SCALE
M	MEDICAL	R REEVALUATION PSYCHOLOGICAL	P	PERFORMANCE
S	SPEECH		V	VERBAL

EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT PLACEMENT STATUS	NOT PLACED/REASON
I - EVALUATED AND INELIGBLE	L - LEAST RESTR. ENRVIR.
N - ELIGIBLE AND NOT PLACED	P - PARENTAL REQUEST
P - ELIGIBLE AND PLACED	W - WITHDRAWN FROM CPS

CURRENT ESE COURSES-PF4 SCREEN

IQ__ ___ ___ SCALE __ PRIMARY EXCEPTIONALITY__
Information on first line should appear if entered in PF17.

TRANSPORTATION____ MANUAL BUS HANDLING__ STANDARD DIPLOMA __(Y/N)

EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT TRANSPORTATION CODES

1 - WALKS
2 - REGULAR YELLOW BUS
3 - ESE REGULAR YELLOW BUS
4 - REGULAR BUS (DOOR TO DOOR)
5 - LIFT BUS FOR WHEELCHAIR
6 - LIFT BUS NON-WHEELCHAIR
7 - HARNESS (DOOR TO DOOR)

I R A D CURRENT COURSE INFORMATION

SCHL	CRSE NUM	EMP NUM	CDE*	HRS/WEEK	MIN/WK
- - - -	- - - - -	- - - - - - -	- -	- -.- -	
- - - -	- - - - -	- - - - - - -	- -	- -.- -	
- - - -	- - - - -	- - - - - - -	- -	- -.- -	
- - - -	- - - - -	- - - - - - -	- -	- -.- -	
- - - -	- - - - -	- - - - - - -	- -	- -.- -	
- - - -	- - - - -	- - - - - - -	- -	- -.- -	
- - - -	- - - - -	- - - - - - -	- -	- -.- -	
- - - -	- - - - -	- - - - - - -	- -	- -.- -	
- - - -	- - - - -	- - - - - - -	- -	- -.- -	

*CDE=PRIMARY EXCEPTIONALITY OR RELATED SERVICES CODE

Once the data submitted on this record sheet has been entered into ISIS, please place a hardcopy in the designated administrator/department chairperson's mailbox and sign below. Thank you.

Signature_____Date_____

APPENDIX B

SURVEY OF DATA ENTRY PROCEDURES AND ASSESSMENT OF ESE TERMINOLOGY

SCHOOL MAIL CODE_____JOB TITLE_____

SURVEY OF DATA ENTRY PROCEDURES AND ASSESSMENT OF ESE TERMINOLOGY

In an effort to minimize Exceptional Student (ESE) and/or Student Services errors in State reporting and to achieve the correct FTE Funding, the Region I Office has developed a survey to assess data entry problems at each school. Results of this survey will be used to develop future hands-on inservice training.

DIRECTIONS: Read each statement and mark the most appropriate response. Then enclose the survey in the self-addressed envelope. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact the Gale Kofsky at 687-6565 Ext. 36.

MANAGING DATA ENTRY

1. How many people input ESE data at your school?

   a) 1 person b) 2 people c) 3 or more people

2. Is there a procedure teachers in your ESE department follow when submitting information for data entry?

   a) no b) yes

3. Is there someone in your school who checks the ESE/Student Services Data Input Form before the information is entered

   a) no b) yes

4. About how long does it take before ESE information is entered?

   a) 1 day b) 2 days c) 3 days 4) more than 3 days

5. When you experience a data entry problem, do you

   a) call OIT
   b) call another school
   c) speak to your ESE Dept. Chairperson/Assistant Principal

DATA ENTRY PROBLEMS

6. When a child exits or is dismissed from a program what must be done?

   a) get a parent consent
   b) remove the FEFP Program number
   c) enter the date of the IEP conference
   d) change the child's placement status
   e) all of the above
   f) b,c

7. If a child is eligible, but not placed the following information must be entered:

a) CST conference date
b) case opened
c) case closed
d) current evaluation
e) eligibility determination date
f) placement status

8. When a child is enrolled in more than one program, which of the following must be entered?

a) all programs
b) only the primary exceptionalty
c) only those programs in which the child is enrolled full-time
d) all academic courses, FEFP program codes, contact hours

9) The Outcome code represents

a) the type of testing that needs to be done (G=gifted)
b) the month, day, year of the Child Study Team conference
c) the month, day, year of the Child Study Team conference in which alternative strategies were recommended.
d) the M-team's decision on eligibility
e) the Placement Status of a student

10. Which of the following activities is in the correct order?

a) case tested, case opened, case closed, case staffed
b) CST conference for evaluation, CST for alternative strategies, case opened, case evaluated, case closed
c) CST for evaluation, case opened, case evaluated, eligibility determined, case closed, case staffed
d) none of the above
e) all of the above

11. Although gifted students are never retested, what must be entered on the Student Services screen?

a) Child Study Team
b) case opened
c) case evaluated
d) case closed
e) signed parent consent
f) IEP conference date
g) item a-d
h) all of the above

12. The Eligibility Determination date is the

a) the month, day, year that the student's eligibility or ineligibility for a program was established
b) the month, day, year the staffing specialist holds the IEP conference
c) the month, day, year the Child Study Team refers a child for an evaluation

13. The Placement Date is the:

a) the day the staffing is held
b) the day the student registers at the receiving school
c) the day the student was placed in an ESE program
d) all of the above

14. An IQ score is:

a) a three digit number obtained on a standardized individual test of intelligence
b) a number between 1 and 130
c) greater than 100 if a child is gifted
d) updated every three years during the reevaluation

15. Students are dismissed from ESE programs when

a) they are withdrawn from school
b) a parent requests that a child be taken out of an ESE program
c) when they are ready for mainstreaming
d) a child has achieved maximum gains

16. Students who are enrolled full-time in a program

a) take a minimum of two ESE classes
b) spend three hours a day in ESE classes
c) a child has 12 or more ESE contact hours a week
d) have a total of 25 ESE contact hours a week

17. There are five types of evaluations a CST can recommend:

a) gifted
b) medical
c) psychiatric
d) reevaluation psychological
e) private
f) neurological testing
g) speech
h) initial psychological
i) a,b,c,d,g
j) a,b,d,g,h,

18. Students who are temporarily placed in an ESE program:

a) have been in a program in another county or state
b) brought an active IEP from another school
c) need to be tested within one FTE period, unless a current psychological is received
d) appear to be eligible for a program
e) all of the above
f) a,b,c

19. When a student is found to be eligible, but not placed then

a) no IEP date is entered
b) only the student Services Screens (PF16-17) are completed
c) the Not Place/Reason is entered in the ESE Services Screen
d) b,c
e) a,b,c

20. What do you think would increase the turn-around time and accuracy of data entry at your school? (circle all that apply).

a) hands-on inservice
b) being assigned a "buddy" in another school
c) having a data input sheet with all the codes
d) having an administrator/ESE chairperson check the information before it is entered
e) establishing procedures for how, when, and where data input sheets should be submitted